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REV. DR. YOUNG'S

F U N E R A L S E R M O N

ON

MADAM PRESCOTT.

THE BENEFICENT WOMAN.

A

DISCOURSE

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

MRS. CATHARINE G. PRESCOTT,

DELIVERED IN

THE CHURCH ON CHURCH GREEN,

MAY 23, 1852.

BY ALEXANDER YOUNG, D.D.

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“Matronis gratiæ actæ, honosque additus, ut earum, sicut virorum, post mortem solennis laudatio esset.” — LIVY, Hist. v. 50.

DISCOURSE.

ACTS, IX. 36.

THIS WOMAN WAS FULL OF GOOD WORKS AND ALMSDEEDS WHICH SHE DID.

WHAT higher tribute could be paid to the memory of female excellence? What nobler eulogium could be pronounced upon a Christian woman? Who could desire a more honorable epitaph to be inscribed on the monument of a mother, a wife, a sister, or a daughter? It is the true Christian eulogy, in perfect harmony with the letter, as well as the spirit, of the New Testament, which tells us that charity is the greatest of the evangelical graces, — greater even than faith; that pure and undefiled religion consists in relieving the fatherless and solacing the widows in their affliction; and that the least equivocal and most acceptable way of testifying our love to Christ is by aiding and benefiting his brethren, by feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the houseless stranger, tending the sick, and visiting the prisoner. Others may put forth, in behalf of their female relatives and

friends, loftier pretensions, and present more ambitious titles to distinction and remembrance. They may covet for them the fame of beauty and grace, of exquisite refinement, of faultless taste, and transcendent culture. They may desire for them the praise of genius and talent, and the glory of intellectual attainments. They may wish to see their brows encircled with the wreath of literary renown, and their names enrolled among the Aspasia's, the Corinnas, the De Staels, and the Edgeworths of the lettered world. But as for myself, I must frankly say, that for those women whom I venerate and esteem, I ask, I desire, — when they have passed away and sleep in death, — no higher praise, no other eulogy, than that uttered in the text. There can be no praise more substantial, none more enduring, none more honorable to the departed, none more precious and consolatory to the survivors.

The text suggests, as a profitable subject of meditation, woman's capacity for usefulness, and her power of doing good. We have heard a good deal, of late years, of the mission and the sphere of woman; and, among much that has been well and wisely said on this topic, there has been not a little very unwisely and inconsiderately spoken. No one, I trust, will suppose that I am going to discuss the vexed question of woman's rights. This is neither the fitting time nor place for such a discussion; and, besides,

even were it to my taste, it is too large a subject to be treated in a single discourse. In the few remarks, therefore, which I have to offer, I shall confine myself to what I conceive to be the legitimate, distinctive vocation of woman in the present age, in this modern world, in this community, in which it is our favored lot to live.

The appropriate sphere of woman, it seems to me, is clearly indicated by her physical and moral constitution; and her appropriate labors and duties are designated and determined by her peculiar sensibilities, capacities, and endowments.

God is wise, infinitely wise. No created thing proceeds from his hands that has not its province and functions assigned it in the grand system of the universe. If these functions escape our observation, you may be sure it is owing to our limited vision, not to any defect in the divine plan. The further we extend our inquiries, the more carefully and profoundly we pursue our investigations into nature, and the larger the amount of our science, the less disposed shall we be to question the truth of the declaration, "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." All inanimate objects — the plants, the rocks, the waters — have their distinctive properties, and their purpose in reference to the harmony of the universe. Just so it is with all sensitive beings, devoid of reason; their organs, their senses, their instincts, their affinities, have all a definite and

fixed aim, a destination which makes them indispensable to their possessors. Now, as to intelligent beings, is it likely that God, in respect to them, has deviated from the principle which had guided him in the general plan of creation? Can we admit that he has bestowed on them propensities without an end, affections without a corresponding object, faculties that are of no possible use, and feelings that are never to be developed by exercise? Brethren, examine, study, analyze the faculties of your souls; inquire the purpose of all and of each, and you will see that there is not one of them that is useless; that even those which are inactive at present are disposed and arranged with reference to the future, and are to act hereafter in certain given circumstances, on certain emergent occasions, where they will have important offices to perform.

This being the case, can you believe that it was fortuitously, and without a design, that God implanted in the heart of woman, far more deeply than in the heart of man, an instinctive perception of the sufferings and sorrows of her race, a tender pity and sympathy for them, and an eager and passionate desire to relieve and solace them? This delicate sensibility, so easily excited, so impatient to afford relief, so inventive, so devoted, so self-sacrificing, — was it placed there, like treasure in the hands of a miser, to produce nothing, to help nobody, to exist without living, to be there without acting?

We must banish the thought of God from the contemplation of his works, not to recognize in this disposition of woman to sympathize with human misery, the seal of a special mission assigned to her; a mission of relief, of consolation, of charity. Pity has been attached inseparably to her soul, just as transparency is to the atmosphere, and heat to fire, that she may go with her soothing words, with her moral and physical aid, with her smiles and her tears, and rescue the wretched from their sad lot, lift from off their hearts their heavy burden, sympathize in their bereavements and sorrows, and show them that there is something besides anguish and trouble in the world; in a word, that she may dispense among the suffering the compassion and the charities of Heaven.

This gentle mission of mercy, this holy vocation of charity, has been committed to her with all the capacities and powers requisite to its accomplishment. It is her task, her lot, her ministry, her special destination; and it constitutes one of her highest claims to our gratitude and admiration.

But let us lift the veil a little higher; let us scrutinize this nature of woman more closely; let us ask whether it has not something more to reveal to us. Let us see whether these descendants of Eve, our mothers, our sisters, our wives, our daughters, have discharged all their duties, — I do not say towards their fathers, their husbands, their brothers, their children, but towards humanity, — when they have

paid it, and to the full extent of their powers too, a generous tribute of sympathy and pity. Does no other principle show itself in their souls? Does no other voice rise from their bosom, pointing out to them social obligations of a higher character? Has God endowed them with no feeling but this melting tenderness for others' woes, and this strong impulse to relieve them? In a word, however holy and venerable these functions and offices may be, would the woman who should most scrupulously perform them, fulfil, by that act alone, all the ends for which God designed her? Do you suppose, for instance, that if the suggestions of faith meet with fewer obstacles when seeking admission to her heart, — that if she turns with more enthusiasm towards those subjects of meditation which have heaven for their origin and end, — that if religious emotions spring up more naturally in her than in man, and pass with her more readily from theory into practice, — do you suppose, I ask, that God has endowed her with this capacity, that it may lie dormant and undeveloped, like perfume imprisoned in a casket? Is there not, in this divine endowment of woman, the diploma of an express mission of edification and piety to the generation amidst which she lives? Do you not see that she is thus specially appointed by Heaven to guard the principle, which makes religion not a speculative but a practical concern; not an affair of the understanding, but of the heart; not a matter of argument and discussion,

but a subject that involves a task and a duty, — that requires her to exert herself, and to sacrifice herself, if need be, to secure the influence of the religious sentiment in the world, and to help it to bring forth its fruits?

But it is not merely by the expressive language of our instincts, and by the study of the female heart, that we perceive the beautiful adaptation and fitness of this spiritual apostleship that belongs to woman; nor is it merely because we love to see this apostleship exercised around us, sanctifying the community, and blessing our homes: it is also traceable both in the old and the new covenant. Under the Mosaic economy, do we not see pious women accompanying the teachers of the Law in the work of their ministry? Under the Gospel dispensation, how many women have immortalized their names by the ardor of their zeal, and by the services which they rendered to this holy cause in its feeble infancy! Fervent disciples of the Saviour, — persuaded by his discourses, attracted by the beauty of his daily life, and subdued by his heavenly and self-sacrificing spirit, — with what earnestness did they follow his steps, to assist him in his labors, and to smoothen his rugged path! “Jesus,” we are told, “went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him; and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, and Joanna

the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance." They were the last, too, at his cross, and the first at his sepulchre on the morning of his resurrection. And how many of them do we also see helping the apostles, practising charity, operating upon the minds of men, and gradually leading captive to the faith the timid wills of multitudes who dared not break away all at once from their old teachers, from the powers of the world, and from the chains of long-established habits! Now, are not such facts, likewise, a clear manifestation of the purpose of God?

Of course, with our present manners and customs, with our systems of public and private education, and with our institutions of religious instruction and worship, women are no longer called to the public exercise and manifestation of their faith. But, although their work is now more private, is it on that account any the less important, less necessary, or less beneficent? Has not every one of them a sphere of action, where she can fulfil her high vocation, and pay her tribute of gratitude and duty? Have they not all an influence to exert, more or less extensive, according as they are more or less in sight? On whom, if not on them, devolves the earliest education of childhood, the impress of which is so tenacious and enduring, that, according as it is attended to or neglected, the whole future life of the pupil is affected thereby? Is it not they, too, who, by their teachings and their actions, prepare

and decide the moral condition of each successive generation? Where does nature assign to children a place during their first years, but by the side of those who in infancy carried them in their bosoms? To fathers it belongs to enlarge the knowledge, to mothers to form the character, of the young; to fathers belongs the cultivation of the faculties of the mind, to mothers the development of the affections of the heart; to fathers to train up good citizens for the service of their country, to mothers to provide supports to morality and religion; to fathers to plant seeds for time, to mothers for eternity.

And do we not see that the inclinations, the habits, and the physical organization of woman, all tell her that this is her sphere of duty, and recommend it to her as the only one to the fulfilment of which are attached irreproachable enjoyments? This general and innate love of retirement, of a sedentary, quiet life, free from agitation, and confined within a circle where the eye can see and observe every thing, is not this an indication of her calling and destiny? This love of home, this need of concentration, this decided preference for occupations which do not require much motion or action, — in short, this whole moral constitution of woman, is it not the voice of God calling to them, Daughters of Eve, your debt to your fellow-men is great; and I have provided you the means of discharging it. On you depend, in great measure, the destinies of society; because it is you that form and

shape the elements of society. If there is selfishness among its members, is it not because, through a culpable weakness, you have not inspired them with any other love than the love of themselves? If there is a laxity of moral principle and a growing licentiousness, is it not because you have not sedulously watched over your interesting and precious charge, but have permitted your children to hear conversations and to read books which have gradually blighted the delicate and sensitive flower of moral purity, which you should have guarded and watered, and kept ever fresh and blooming? If there is a want of reverence for old age and for sacred things, is it not because you have not, in the presence of your children, shielded these objects from the blasting breath of the scoffer? If the world deserts the living fountains of divine truth, and gathers around stagnant cisterns and muddy pools, indifferent to the mercies from on high, careless of its end, forgetful of heaven, and thinking only of the passing hour and the evanescent joys of earth, is it not, daughters of Eve, because you have not shown your children, from their earliest and most susceptible age, the avenues to Zion and the ways to the Temple; but have let them believe, nay, have taught them, — by your example at least, the most forcible and impressive mode of instruction, — that religion, and the worship which is its public expression, are not very important things, at least not matters of the first rank and the highest concernment? They have seen you

indolently reclining as a guest at the banquet of life, and moistening your lips from the enchanted cup which Providence has put into your hands; they have seen you breathing the air embalmed with a thousand flowers, without your eye seeking for Him who gave them their graceful forms and their delightful perfumes, without your thought ascending to the Source of these enchanting wonders. You have not, it is true, extinguished in them the love and the fear of God; but have you cherished them, and made them grow? Have you inspired them with the desire of knowing and serving this great Being, on whom, — notwithstanding all you may think and say about it, — on whom every thing depends, both in this world where you now are, and in the world whither you are going?

Yes, brethren, the task of woman is unquestionably great, beautiful, noble, holy. She is entitled to a vast tribute of honor and gratitude from man, if she perseveres and succeeds in accomplishing it; whilst, on the other hand, there will rest upon her forehead an ineffaceable stain, and the responsibility of a great injury to society, if she declines or neglects her mission, and thereby sends forth and scatters abroad in the community corrupt and corrupting elements, fomenters of strife, firebrands of disorder, men of unsettled convictions, without moral principle, and without the salutary restraints of religion.

My friends, you have doubtless already anticipated the occasion, and surmised the bearing, of this Discourse. I bring you to-day a melancholy message. Since I last addressed you from this place, I have been unexpectedly called to discharge one of the saddest duties of my office, — to perform the last solemn rites of religion over the mortal remains of one of the oldest, most venerable, most estimable members of our church; one who, for nearly half a century, has been an assiduous and devout worshipper at this altar; and who, through a long protracted life, possessed of all that heart could wish, surrounded with all the means and opportunities of enjoyment that wealth could purchase or station supply, — in the lap of ease and luxury, and amidst the tempting and seductive influences of worldly prosperity, — has yet most beautifully and strikingly exemplified the power of Christian faith, the worth of Christian piety, and the loveliness of Christian charity. To her, if to any one, the words of the text were strictly and literally applicable: “This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.”

I propose, brethren, to speak to you to-day of the prominent traits in the character of this revered and lamented woman, — this mother in our Israel, — not so much, however, with the view of eulogizing the dead as of benefiting the living. She needs not our eulogy, neither can it profit her; for she has passed on, beyond the reach of our poor praise or censure.

I am aware that it has not been customary in our churches to hold up to view the lives and characters of distinguished women ; and I know that the modest and timid spirit of our departed friend would have shrunk instinctively from the thought of any mention of her name and virtues in this public audience. But, my friends, I feel it to be due to the religion which she professed and adorned, that a character, formed under its silent influence, and exhibiting so many of its peculiar traits and loveliest graces, should be presented from the pulpit as an example and model for imitation. Nor do I see any good reason why female worth should not be publicly portrayed and eulogized, as well as manly virtue. At any rate, from time to time, occasions and cases occur that seem not only to justify but to demand the practice. It is related by Plutarch, in his Life of Camillus, that “when the Roman women parted with their golden ornaments, as a religious offering, for the public good, the senate decreed, in honor of their piety, that it should be lawful henceforth to make funeral orations for them also.” Our Saviour, too, seems indirectly to sanction and approve this course, when, after commending the act of the woman who poured a box of precious ointment on his head, he added, “ Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.” Let me, then, be permitted to speak

frankly and freely of my beloved parishioner and friend. Virtue knows no sex. In Christ there is neither male nor female.

The late Madam CATHARINE GREENE PRESCOTT was born in this city on the 1st of August, 1767; and was therefore, at the time of her death, in the eighty-fifth year of her age. She was the daughter of Mr. Thomas Hickling, a merchant of this place, who subsequently established himself in business in the Island of St. Michael, one of the Azores, where he was for many years the Consul of the United States. Having lost her mother at the early age of seven, she was brought up in the house of Mr. Rufus Greene, her maternal grandfather, where she remained till January, 1786, when, in her nineteenth year, she sailed for St. Michael's, to rejoin her father. After spending two years on this island, she embarked in January, 1788, for England, where she resided nearly two years among her father's relatives in London, witnessing, with enthusiastic delight, the bewildering novelties and celebrities of the great metropolis. In September, 1789, she returned home to her native town; and in December, 1793, at the age of twenty-six, she was united in marriage with her late husband, the honorable Judge Prescott, then a promising young lawyer, resident in Salem, with whom she was permitted to spend fifty-one years in the happiest union. In 1808, the family removed to Boston, and joined

this religious Society, with which she has continued to worship till her decease. In her life, as in that of most women, in quiet times and in prosperous circumstances, there was but little that was remarkable or eventful. She lived a regular, uniform, peaceful life, occupied in domestic cares, and private duties, and unostentatious charities, furnishing few materials for the biographer. We are to speak, therefore, not so much of her life as of her character.

I. The most prominent and remarkable trait in the character of our deceased fellow-worshipper was, unquestionably, *benevolence*, humanity, sympathy with suffering and sorrow, or whatever other name you may please to give to that sentiment or principle, which the Gospel, in its comprehensiveness, denominates charity. In her this was both a sentiment and a principle, both an instinctive feeling and an advised choice. Her benevolence welled up from the depths of a generous nature and a kind heart, and was sustained and invigorated by a controlling sense of duty. Affection and obligation conspired to strengthen and perpetuate this sentiment in her soul.

And this benevolence of hers was not "a cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed." She did not sit down at home, in tapestried saloons, on velvet couches, to muse on human wretchedness, and indulge the selfish luxury of a speculative and theoretical benevolence. No: hers was an actual, practical, working philanthropy. Not content with employing

others as the almoners of her bounty, in the spirit of her divine Master she “went about doing good,” remembering the forgotten, attending to the neglected, and visiting the forsaken. In the expressive language of the patriarch Job, she “was eyes to the blind, and feet was she to the lame. She was a mother to the poor; and the cause which she knew not she searched out. When the ear heard her, then it blessed her; and when the eye saw her, it gave witness to her; because she delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon her, and she caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.”

Her beneficence, too, was not spasmodic and intermitting, fluctuating with the state of her nerves or the state of the atmosphere; but it was systematic, regular, and continuous, pursued through a long course of time, nay, even to the close of life. She did not plead her years as an excuse for retiring from the field of duty and the work of active benevolence. She did not, as is too apt to be the case, become weary in well-doing; but, in the words of the Psalmist, she “still brought forth fruit in old age.” She was accustomed to visit, on her errands of mercy, not only the utterly destitute and needy, but those, likewise, in reduced circumstances, — persons who, to use a homely but expressive phrase, “had seen better days,” and to whom a visit from those who have

known them in their better days is more than meat and drink. It gratifies their honorable pride; it flatters their commendable self-respect. A visit of hers to one of her sick out-door pensioners was more efficacious than the prescription of the physician. Her benignant look was like a healing balm; and the sweet tones of her voice worked like a charm, and did good like a medicine.

Doing good, making others happy, was with her a positive delight, an exquisite pleasure; and, I suppose, you could not have imposed upon her a greater hardship, or required of her a costlier sacrifice, than to have debarred her from the privilege and enjoyment of going about upon her errands of charity. She was accustomed to say that she must be abroad, daily, constantly; that the air was her life, without which she should droop and die. Was it not equally true that her habitual employment when abroad, her beneficent activity, was her spiritual life, the life of her soul, by means of which it grew and was strengthened and purified? For, at such times, was she not always employed "about her Father's business"?

Was it not, then, kindly and mercifully ordered, that her activity and her life ceased together; that she did not outlive her faculties or her usefulness; that her moral energies and her warm affections held out to the last moment; that she was not doomed to be imprisoned, for months and years, in the solitude and gloom of a sick chamber; but that, almost to

the last, she was permitted to go abroad, and have her spirits cheered by the pleasant sunshine, by beholding the reviving verdure of spring, and by inhaling the fresh breezes of heaven ; and that, on the very day previous to her death, she was enabled to come down and take her accustomed place at the table ?

You are aware, my friends, that benevolence sometimes exposes itself to contempt, by being associated with mental imbecility and incompetency for the practical affairs of life. A charitable, kind-hearted woman is often considered synonymous with a well-meaning but feeble-minded woman, — one ignorant of human nature and the world, and consequently liable to be deceived and imposed upon. But this certainly was not the case with our departed friend. With her enlarged benevolence were combined a most excellent judgment, discretion, and good sense ; without which qualities almsgiving is apt to become an abuse and nuisance, a positive injury to the recipients as well as to society. With the liabilities to imposition, to which all charitably disposed persons are necessarily exposed, it is believed that our lamented friend suffered less in this way than most of those similarly situated ; so that her large and liberal charities, — which, during the latter years of her life, absorbed nearly the whole of her ample income, — being chiefly dispensed by her own hand or under her own eye, contributed to produce unmingled good, leaving no sediment or sting behind.

Her constant familiarity with human suffering — with sights and sounds of woe — did not sadden her heart, nor depress her spirits, nor sour her temper, nor make her gloomy and morose. She was no ascetic. She enjoyed life. She was a cheerful, happy Christian. She thought this a good, bright, beautiful world; and that we ought to use it, and make the most and the best of it, manifesting our gratitude to God by enjoying and diffusing his bounties, being always ready to distribute, and willing to communicate. She delighted to see others happy, — to see the young, especially, enjoying themselves; and, even in advanced age, she sympathized with all their hopes and prospects in life, and entered into all their pleasures and plans of happiness with a sort of juvenile hilarity and gladsomeness.

I have often been struck with the unaffected sympathy with which she mingled with all classes of society, the most various and opposite, — the facility and freedom with which she moved and acted among them, — the versatility with which she accommodated herself to the different scenes and walks in life to which she was called, and the perfect ease with which she passed from one circle to another, — carrying with her, however, into each the same essential qualities, the same kindness of heart, the same regard for the feelings of others, the same affability, courtesy, and urbanity. After spending the morning in visiting the pensioners upon her bounty, in the dark corners

of the city, and brightening with the sunshine of her presence the dwellings of the poor and lowly, this excellent lady would return home to her own splendid mansion, to preside, with singular grace and dignity, at her hospitable table, around which was statedly gathered whatever in this community was distinguished by genius and station, and whatever in this country was most dignified by statesmanship and talent. At such times I have observed her engaged in animated conversation with her favored guests, and sustaining an equal part with the greatest minds of this and of other lands; and I have seen men of commanding intellect and the largest acquirements delighting in her society, and, by their deferential demeanor, paying a willing homage to her intuitive and comprehensive wisdom.

It is well known that Madam PRESCOTT took a particular interest in all societies and institutions designed to relieve the infirm, sick, aged, and destitute of her own sex. Of these institutions the one nearest and dearest to her heart, and which for years had enjoyed the benefit of her oversight and guidance, was the Boston Asylum for Female Orphans. For thirty-nine years she has been actively engaged in the management of that noble institution; and for seventeen years past she has been its First Directress, or President. And who that was ever present can forget the unstudied grace and benignant air with which she presided at its anniversary meetings?

Methinks I see her now, with that light, attenuated form, — which it seems as though a breath might blow away, — and with that slightly stooping gait, indicative, as it were, of her humility and meekness. With what gentleness does she lead up the little orphans, one by one, to the font of baptism, and, as a true godmother, dedicates them to their God and Saviour! Who that has witnessed one of those beautiful and touching scenes will ever forget it?

That institution, so dear to her in life, was in her memory and in her heart to the last; and in her will she has bequeathed to it a valuable legacy. Though others should cease to remember her, those motherless children never will forget her; and, though no monument should be erected to record her virtues,

“ Her bones,
Now she has run her course, and sleeps in blessings,
Shall have a tomb of orphans’ tears wept on them.”

II. Another trait in the character of our departed friend, hardly less remarkable than her disinterested benevolence, was her unaffected *humility*. Indeed, her humility was simply one of the phases and exercises of her benevolence. She seemed surprised that any good which she could do should be deemed worthy of consideration and praise. She

“ Did good by stealth, and blushed to find it fame.”

As has been beautifully said by another, “like a fair taper, when she shined to all the room, yet round about

her own station, she had cast a shadow and a cloud ; and she shined to everybody but herself. But the perfectness of her prudence and excellent parts could not be hid ; and all her humility and arts of concealment made the virtues more amiable and illustrious. For as pride sullies the beauty of the fairest virtues, so humility is the greatest eminency and art of publication in the whole world.”

Although there was much in her circumstances and position to make her proud, — although she had a right, if any one, to take an honest pride in her family, in a name distinguished through three generations,* — yet she was wholly free from this childish weakness, this offensive foible. I have often thought that some of our haughty dames, who toss the head and curl the lip, and look down with scorn on those whom they deem beneath them in the social scale, might well learn a lesson from the gracious spirit and bearing of this meek woman, — who was accustomed to treat all, the humblest as well as the highest, with uniform respect and kindness ; and hence won the affection and the love of all. In true lowliness of mind, she esteemed others better than herself ; and, as the Apostle enjoins, she condescended to those of low

* Colonel William Prescott, the commander of the American forces at the battle of Bunker Hill, — his son, William Prescott, her husband, the eminent counsellor and jurist, — and his son, William Hickling Prescott, the author of the “History of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic,” of the “History of the Conquest of Mexico,” and of the “History of the Conquest of Peru.”

estate. And yet there was no apparent, studied condescension on her part; and those who received her attentions and civilities felt that there was none. Her treatment of them was perfectly natural and spontaneous. The law of kindness was in her heart as well as on her tongue; and she habitually and unconsciously practised that highest species of politeness as well as of charity, — regard for the feelings of others.

III. The last, the crowning grace in her character, was her humble *piety*. She was a true believer, a devout worshipper of the Father, a sincere and meek disciple of the Saviour. She loved religion, and every thing connected with it, — all its manifestations and exercises, — the worship of God's house and the ordinances of the Gospel, — sacred seasons and holy places. It was only on the last Sunday morning, the day before her death, that, looking from her window on the crowds wending their way to church, she said, "O what a blessed privilege do these people enjoy! I fear that I have not sufficiently appreciated and improved it." And yet, my friends, we all know that she has been one of the most constant and attentive of worshippers. For years, though past the age of eighty, she has been accustomed, through winter's cold and summer's heat, to walk from her house to church, a distance of half a mile, both to the morning and the evening sacrifice. What an example to us all!

And yet she was no formalist or devotee. She was a pious, religious woman, in the best sense of those words, proving her faith, as we have seen, by her works, and testifying her love to God by her love to his children. "I have seen," says Jeremy Taylor, "a female religion that wholly dwelt upon the face and tongue; that, like a wanton and an undressed tree, spends all its juice in suckers and irregular branches, in leaves and gum; and, after all such goodly outsides, you should never eat an apple, or be delighted with the beauties or the perfumes of a hopeful blossom. But the religion of this excellent lady was of another constitution. It took root downward in humility, and brought forth fruit upward in the substantial graces of a Christian, — in charity and justice, in meekness and modesty, in fair friendships and sweetness of society. It dwelt upon her spirit, and was incorporated with the periodical work of every day. She did not believe that religion was intended to minister to fame and reputation, but to pardon of sins, to the pleasure of God, and the salvation of souls. She had not very much of the forms and outsides of godliness, but she was hugely careful for the power of it, for the moral, essential, and useful parts; such which would make her be, not seem to be, religious."

Does any one presume to ask whether such a woman was prepared to die? I answer, her whole life was a

preparation for death, the best that could be made ; and, when the summons came, she was found upon her post of duty, watching, with her lamp trimmed and burning, and waiting for the door to be opened, that she might enter in. The contemplation of this mysterious change in our mode of existence she had not postponed to the sick chamber, for an enfeebled mind and a decaying body. It was a subject familiar to her thoughts,—the more so, perhaps, since the death of her husband,—and the increasing infirmities of age made her sensible that her departure could not be much longer deferred. In a note which she wrote me at the beginning of this year, she says, “Eighty-four years forbid my anticipating to-morrow ; but my daily prayer is, that I may be prepared for the solemn change that cannot be far distant.”

Brethren and sisters of this church and congregation, what a loss, what an irreparable loss, have we, in common with her family and her numerous friends, and the whole community, sustained in the death of this excellent woman ! How shall we miss her every Sunday from her accustomed place ! It seems to me as though the central pillar of our church had fallen, and we were mourning in sack-cloth and ashes amidst its ruins. And yet I cannot feel altogether sad. Gratitude and gladness involuntarily mingle with my sorrow and my regret. I cannot help blessing God that such a woman has lived, and that the world has been the better and the

happier that she has lived in it. I rejoice that she has lived among us ; that she has been of our church ; and that, as her pastor, I have been privileged to know her intimately, and been so long honored with her friendship and affection. Henceforth I shall think better of human nature, and shall be strengthened, I trust, in my duties, and nerved for my trials, and comforted in my sorrows, by the sweet remembrance of her goodness and love.

Can you wonder, brethren, that I sometimes feel sad and disheartened, when I see my early friends in the church, those who invited and welcomed me to the ministry in this place, and who have stood by me, in sunshine and in storm, for nearly thirty years, dropping, one after another, like autumn fruit ? New and faithful parishioners, I am aware, may come and take their places in these pews ; but can they, with the kindest intentions and the best endeavors, supply the loss in the heart ? New forms and faces may greet the eye ; but can they banish from the mind the familiar features of the departed, which rise up before me at the communion table, and haunt me in my dreams ? Oh ! this rupture of old ties is the hardest trial of the ministry, as it is the great trial of life. They go away, and leave us alone ; so that we are almost tempted to say with the aged Simeon, “ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.”

But I cannot, I must not close this Discourse in a

lugubrious, sepulchral tone, saddening to your feelings as well as to my own. My departed parishioner would not wish me to do so. She would not have her death leave such an impression. It would be out of keeping, too, with her serene and cheerful spirit: it would be doing disrespect to her memory. Let me, then, close it with gratitude and gladness, with faith and with hope, — with gratitude for the past, with hope in the future, and with a faith full of immortality.

“ Many daughters have done virtuously ; but thou excellest them all. Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain ; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands ; and let her own works praise her in the gates.”

A P P E N D I X.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MANAGERS OF THE BOSTON FEMALE ASYLUM.

THE Managers of the BOSTON FEMALE ASYLUM held their monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 26, 1852.

On this occasion, but one thought pressed upon every mind, and one feeling saddened every heart. It needed not the vacant seat, so long occupied by their venerated and beloved head, to remind the members of the Board of the great loss they sustain in the death of Madam PRESCOTT; for, since it occurred, they had not ceased to mourn that the places which her presence has blessed shall know her no more. And, although conscious how little any words of form can express the feelings of those to whom their departed friend was so much more than merely official relations would imply, they would not omit even the least of the customary modes of testifying respect, where so much of honor and reverence and affection are due.

It was therefore —

“ *Voted*, That the afflictive providence which, in the removal of Madam PRESCOTT, has brought sorrow to so many hearts, is deeply felt by the members of this Board, where she has so long presided with that ability and courtesy which won alike the reverence and the love of all; at the same time that she extended

her beneficent influence over every department of the establishment; so that from the Matron, who looked up to her in confidence for kindness and counsel, to the youngest of our Orphan family, it was felt that a mother indeed is fallen in our Israel.

“That we cherish in affectionate remembrance all those graces of character and manner, which made her presence like a sun-beam among us; all those strong and high qualities, so nobly displayed when occasion demanded their exercise; all that made us feel as if her fourscore and four years had hardly brought age to one who bore about her so much of the best spirit of youth, and whose heart could never grow old.

“But, while we mourn our own loss, we would, in that faith which was the support and guide of our departed friend, adore the mercy which continued her to us so long, and which has now removed her before time had brought upon her the evils she would have found it the hardest to bear. We bless God that the dark clouds did not settle over her setting sun, but that it went down in brightness to rise again in glory.

“*Also voted*, That a copy of this Vote be offered to the children of Madam PRESCOTT, as an expression of sympathy and respect.”

The Managers were desirous that the name of each one should testify how much the feelings, so inadequately expressed, are shared by all; and the Vote was signed by —

MRS. CHARLES TRACY,
MISS MARY OTIS,
MRS. AMOS LAWRENCE,
MRS. HENRY HALL,
MRS. WILLIAM REYNOLDS,
MISS M. F. LAMB,
MRS. HENRY GREW,

MRS. B. T. PICKMAN,
MRS. JAMES K. MILLS,
MRS. ALBERT FEARING,
MRS. CHARLES BARNARD,
MISS E. B. INCHES,
MRS. B. T. REED, and
MRS. EDWARD CODMAN.

A. L. WALES,

Secretary of the Boston Female Asylum.

